





With best wishes.

Xmas 1934. E.Y.W.



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*Francis Thompson*

*Drawn by the Hon. Neville Lytton 1907*

# The Hound of Heaven



Francis Thompson

George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd.  
Publishers .... London

*Printed in Great Britain*

THE HOUND  
OF HEAVEN

*225th Thousand*

# THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

*By* Francis Thompson

London

Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd.

Publishers to the Holy See

Orchard Street and Paternoster Row

1928

*Made and Printed in Great Britain*

## *Of “The Hound of Heaven”*

FRANCIS THOMPSON, born in Preston in 1859, spent the greater part of his mature life in London, where he died in 1907. He was educated at Ushaw College, near Durham, and afterwards went to Owens College, Manchester, to qualify as a doctor.

But his gift as prescriber and healer lay elsewhere than in the consulting-room. He walked to London in search of a living,

## Of “The Hound of Heaven”

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finding, indeed, a prolonged near approach to death in its streets; until at length his literary powers were discovered by himself and by others, and he began, in his later twenties, an outpouring of verse which endured for a half-decade of years—his *Poems*, his *Sister Songs*, and his *New Poems*.

*The Hound of Heaven* “marked the return of the nineteenth century to Thomas à Kempis.” The great poetry of it transcended, in itself and in its influence, all conventions; so that it won the love of a Catholic

## Of “The Hound of Heaven”

Mystic like Coventry Patmore; was included by Dean Beeching in his *Lyra Sacra* among its older high compeers; and gave new heart to quite another manner of man, Edward Burne-Jones.

W. M.



THE HOUND  
OF HEAVEN



## *The Hound of Heaven*

I FLED Him, down the nights  
and down the days;  
I fled Him, down the arches  
of the years;  
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine  
ways  
Of my own mind; and in the  
mist of tears  
I hid from Him, and under running  
laughter.  
Up vistaed hopes, I sped;  
And shot, precipitated.

## The Hound of Heaven

---

Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd  
fears,

From those strong Feet that  
followed, followed after.

But with unhurrying chase,  
And unperturbèd pace,  
Deliberate speed, majestic in-  
stancy,  
They beat—and a Voice  
beat  
More instant than the  
Feet—  
“All things betray thee, who  
betrayest Me.”

## The Hound of Heaven

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,  
By many a hearted casement, cur-  
tained red,

Trellised with intertwining chari-  
ties

(For, though I knew His love Who  
followèd,

Yet was I sore adread  
Lest, having Him, I must have  
naught beside);

But, if one little casement parted wide,  
The gust of His approach would  
clash it to.

Fear wist not to evade as Love  
wist to pursue

## The Hound of Heaven

Across the margent of the world  
I fled,  
And troubled the gold gateways  
of the stars,  
Smiting for shelter on their  
clangèd bars;  
Fretted to dulcet jars  
And silvern chatter the pale ports  
o' the moon.  
I said to dawn: Be sudden; to eve:  
Be soon—  
With thy young skyey blossoms  
heap me over  
From this tremendous  
Lover!

## The Hound of Heaven

Float thy vague veil about me, lest  
He see!

I tempted all His servitors, but  
to find

My own betrayal in their constancy,  
In faith to Him their fickleness to  
me,

Their traitorous trueness, and  
their loyal deceit.

To all swift things for swiftness  
did I sue;

Clung to the whistling mane of  
every wind.

But whether they swept,  
smoothly fleet,

## The Hound of Heaven

The long savannahs of the  
blue;

Or whether, Thunder-driven,  
They clanged His chariot  
'thwart a heaven,

Plashy with flying lightnings round  
the spurn o' their feet:—

Fear wist not to evade as Love  
wist to pursue.

Still with unhurrying chase,  
And unperturbèd pace,  
Deliberate speed, majestic in-  
stancy,

Came on the following Feet,

## The Hound of Heaven

And a Voice above their  
beat—

“Naught shelters thee, who  
wilt not shelter Me.”

I sought no more that after which  
I strayed

In face of man or maid;

But still within the little children’s  
eyes

Seems something, something  
that replies,

*They* at least are for me, surely for  
me!

I turned me to them very wistfully;

## The Hound of Heaven

But just as their young eyes grew  
sudden fair

With dawning answers there,  
Their angel plucked them from me  
by the hair.

“Come then, ye other children,  
Nature’s—share

With me” (said I) “your delicate  
fellowship;

Let me greet you lip to lip,  
Let me twine with you  
caresses

Wantoning  
With our Lady-Mother’s vag-  
rant tresses,

## The Hound of Heaven

Banqueting

With her in her wind-walled  
palace,

Underneath her azured daïs,  
Quaffing, as your taintless  
way is,

From a chalice

Lucent-weeping out of the day-  
spring."

So it was done:

*I* in their delicate fellowship was  
one—

Drew the bolt of Nature's secracies.

*I* knew all the swift im-  
portings

## The Hound of Heaven

On the wilful face of skies;  
I knew how the clouds  
arise,

Spumèd of the wild sea-  
snortings;

All that's born or dies  
Rose and drooped with; made  
them shapers

Of mine own moods, or wailful or  
divine—

With them joyed and was  
bereaven.

I was heavy with the even,  
When she lit her glimmering  
tapers

## The Hound of Heaven

Round the day's dead sanctities.

I laughed in the morning's eyes.

I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,

Heaven and I wept together,  
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;

Against the red throb of its sunset-heart

I laid my own to beat,  
And share commingling heat;  
But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.

## The Hound of Heaven

In vain my tears were wet on  
Heaven's grey cheek.

For ah! we know not what each  
other says,

These things and I; in sound  
*I* speak—

*Their* sound is but their stir, they  
speak by silences.

Nature, poor step-dame, cannot  
slake my drouth;

Let her, if she would owe  
me,

Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky,  
and show me  
The breasts o' her tenderness:

## The Hound of Heaven

Never did any milk of hers once  
bless  
My thirsting mouth.

Nigh and nigh draws the chase,  
With unperturbèd pace,  
Deliberate speed, majestic in-  
stancy,  
And past those noisèd Feet  
A Voice comes yet more fleet—  
“Lo! naught contents thee,  
who content’st not Me.”

Naked I wait Thy love’s uplifted  
stroke!

## The Hound of Heaven

My harness piece by piece Thou  
hast hewn from me,  
And smitten me to my  
knee;  
I am defenceless utterly.  
I slept, methinks, and  
woke,  
And, slowly gazing, find me stripped  
in sleep.  
In the rash lustihead of my young  
powers,  
I shook the pillar ing  
hours  
And pulled my life upon me; grimed  
with smears,

## The Hound of Heaven

I stand amid the dust o' the  
mounded years—

My mangled youth lies dead beneath  
the heap,

My days have crackled and gone up  
in smoke,

Have puffed and burst as sun-starts  
on a stream.

Yea, faileth now even dream  
The dreamer, and the lute the  
lutanist;

Even the linked fantasies, in whose  
blossomy twist

I swung the earth a trinket at my  
wrist,

## The Hound of Heaven

Are yielding ; cords of all too weak  
account

For earth, with heavy griefs so over-  
plussed.

Ah ! is Thy love indeed  
A weed, albeit an amaranthine  
weed,

Suffering no flowers except its own  
to mount ?

Ah ! must—

Designer infinite !—

Ah ! must Thou char the wood ere  
Thou canst limn with it ?

My freshness spent its wavering  
shower i' the dust ;

## The Hound of Heaven

And now my heart is as a broken  
fount,

Wherein tear-drippings stagnate,  
spilt down ever  
From the dank thoughts that  
shiver

Upon the sighful branches of my  
mind.

Such is; what is to be?

The pulp so bitter, who shall taste  
the rind?

I dimly guess what time in mists  
confounds;

Yet ever and anon a trumpet  
sounds

## The Hound of Heaven

cfh.! is  
of weed, albeit an am-  
suffering no flowers ex-  
cept

Des

cfh.! must I howl that  
with it?

FACSIMILE LINES FROM

## The Hound of Heaven

Play  
Love indeed  
thine weed,  
to own to mount?  
must —  
infinite! —  
d ere thou canst live

## The Hound of Heaven

From the hid battlements of  
Eternity:

Those shaken mists a space unsettle,  
then

Round the half-glimpsèd turrets  
slowly wash again;

But not ere him who sum-  
moneth

I first have seen, enwound  
With glooming robes purpureal,  
cypress-crowned;

His name I know, and what his  
trumpet saith.

Whether man's heart or life it be  
which yields

## The Hound of Heaven

Thee harvest, must Thy harvest  
fields  
Be dunged with rotten death?

Now of that long pursuit  
Comes on at hand the  
bruit;  
That Voice is round me like a  
bursting sea:  
“ And is thy earth so marred,  
Shattered in shard on  
shard?  
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou  
fliest 'Me!  
Strange, piteous, futile thing,

## The Hound of Heaven

Wherfore should any set thee love  
apart?

Seeing none but I makes much of  
naught" (He said),

"And human love needs human  
meriting:

How hast thou merited—

Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest  
clot?

Alack, thou knowest not

How little worthy of any love thou  
art!

Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble  
thee,

Save Me, save only Me?

## The Hound of Heaven

All which I took from thee I did but  
take,

Not for thy harms,

But just that thou might'st seek it  
in My arms.

All which thy child's mistake  
Fancies as lost, I have stored for  
thee at home:

Rise, clasp My hand, and  
come."

Halts by me that footfall:  
Is my gloom, after all,  
Shade of His hand, outstretched  
caressingly?

## The Hound of Heaven

“Ah, fondest, blindest,  
weakest,

I am He Whom thou seekest !  
Thou dravest love from thee, who  
dravest Me.”

## *Of “The Hound of Heaven”*

WE do not think we forget any of the splendid things of an English anthology when we say that *The Hound of Heaven* seems to us, on the whole, the most wonderful lyric in the language. It fingers all the stops of the spirit, and we hear now a thrilling and dolorous note of doom, and now the quiring of the spheres, and now the very pipes of Pan, but under all the still, sad music of humanity. It is the return of the nineteenth century to Thomas à Kempis.—*The Bookman*.

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## Of The “Hound of Heaven”

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